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PRIVATE GROUP AIRLIFTS SUPPLIES TO CONTRA REFUGEES
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MIAMI

A private relief organization will fly 80,000 pounds weekend to anti-Sandinista refugees in Honduras who have fled "the repressive regime inside Nicaragua," the group's head said Friday.

Americares, a private humanitarian relief organization, the Christian Broadcast Network (CBN), and the Catholic Knights of Malta have organized two flights to ship food, clothing and medicine to Nicaraguan refugees, the group's head, Robert Macauley, said.

The two flights, set to depart from Miami Saturday and Sunday, will coincide with a visit to Honduras by Vice President George Bush.

One anti-Sandinista rebel commander in Nicaragua recently told UPI the group's shipments were being used by Contra guerrilla fighters.

"We are not cognizant of resistance fighters being recipients," said Macauley in a telephone interview. "We do note that the families of many of those struggling for their freedom have family members fighting in Nicaragua.

"That some of the supplies reach their husbands, sons and fathers should be a surprise to no one," he added.

Congress recently cut off covert CIA aid to the rebels, who had received about \$70 million in funds over the last three years. Reports from Honduras and Nicaragua indicate the some 12,000 fighters are critically short on supplies and munitions.

Macauley stressed there is no official government involvement in the airlift. He said the supplies were donated by private businesses, the aircraft are being paid for by CBN, and the Knights of Malta will distribute the supplies once inside Honduras.

"The refugee problem which besets Honduras is a direct result of the repressive regime inside Nicaragua," he said.

Prominent members of the Catholic Order of the Knights of Malta include J. Peter Grace, head of the W.R. Grace conglomerate and former Treasury Secretary William Simon.

Others among the Knights' 1,750 U.S. members are CIA Director William Casey, former Secretary of State Al Haig Jr., and former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano.

The Roman Catholic organization has 1,100 members in 42 nations.

Macauley has said that about \$680,000 in aid has been sent to Miskito Indian refugees in Honduras.

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Several thousand Miskito refugees live among the Misura Indian rebel force fighting in coordination with the 14,000-man Nicaraguan Democratic Force to overthrow the Sandinista regime using havens inside Honduras.

Americares officials have said they have channeled \$14 million in humanitarian aid to El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala through the Knights of Malta over the past two years.

The group has also shipped aid to Poland, Afghanistan and the Sudan.